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ABSTRACT

A review of the literature pertaining to the recruitment and selection of school personnel does not reveal proven methods of teacher selection. However, among those recommended to school districts are establishing a clearly defined written personnel policy and maintaining a good college recruitment program. Also suggested are using the employment interview to investigate a candidate's personality, and the application form to reveal aspects of the prospective teacher's qualifications. (Author/MLF)

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STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING PROFESSIONAL STAFF SELECTION

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

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Teachers are display windows advertising what a school system has to offer. They will be either assets or liabilities, according to the quality of their performances as educators.

A school system is judged by the excellence of the teachers selected to work with the children. The quality of education offered at a given school or in a given school system is only as good as the quality of teachers employed there. The prevailing climate, the curriculum, and the school's public image are greatly influenced by the teaching personnel.

A well-organized program of teacher recruitment and selection is an integral part of a forward-moving school system.

Method of Review

A systematic review of literature pertaining to the recruitment and selection of school personnel was conducted in the University of Georgia's main library in the Fall of 1976. A search of the following guides was made in order to identify appropriate books and journal articles:

Current Index to Journals in Education (ERIC) - January 1969 to September 1976.

Education Index - January 1969 to October 1976.

Encyclopedia of Educational Research - 4th edition (1969).

The University of Georgia Library Card Catalogue.

Research in Education (ERIC) - January 1969 to September 1976.

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Appropriate listings from the following subject headings were examined: teacher recruitment, placement of teachers, and teacher selection and appointment.

Because of the large amount of published material available on the selection of all employees of a school district, the topic was narrowed down to include only information on the selection of the professional educator employees.

In order to give more meaning to the theme of "selection," definitions of these terms are included: "recruitment" and "selection."

"Recruitment: The process by which qualified persons are informed of positions available on the teaching staff of an educational institution and their potential interest is assessed.

Selection: The process of assessing candidates for teaching positions..." (Clifford, 1975, p. 2).

Almost everybody who has any amount of formal education has opinions about some of the qualities that teachers should possess. None of these individuals, however, can prescribe the steps for a foolproof method of teacher selection.

The articles quoted in this report and other articles perused had varying opinions on teacher selection. All were valuable opinions. No one, however, offered any magic formulas or proven methods of infallible teacher selection.

Findings

As a prerequisite to successful teacher recruitment and selection, the board of education must develop a clearly defined personnel policy in written form. This policy, according to Castetter (1976, p. 144), should include at least three components: (1) the system's intent; (2) the procedures for implementing the policy; and (3) the authority to implement the policy.

Without a teacher selection policy statement, administrators responsible for the selection process would make many inconsistent decisions. Even a "lame duck" superintendent can make wise decisions concerning personnel selection if he has a good personnel policy as a guide.

Lang and Stoops (1968, p. 14) are of the opinion that higher salaries for teachers attract persons with greater teaching potential to the profession. Better teaching conditions and more fringe benefits are also suggested as a means of drawing more capable people to the educational scene.

The decade of the seventies has provided a surplus of teachers. School districts can at this time afford to be more selective in the teacher-hiring process. Sivulich (1970, p. 51) suggests that school districts should decide

to actively recruit teachers and not to merely wait for "write-in" or "walk-in" candidates. School districts aggressively seeking the best possible candidates for teaching positions can become even more discriminating in their selection processes and more demanding in the preparation required for beginning teachers.

One effective method of recruiting is maintaining open and constant communication with institutions for teacher preparation. Alberti (1974, p. 287) suggests that a good college recruiting program should:

(1) develop materials describing the district and mail them to the placement bureau well in advance of the recruiting season;

(2) send vacancy notices to college placement offices at regular intervals indicating certification requirements, subject area, grade level, salary schedule, and location;

(3) keep placement officers informed concerning the recruiter's travel plans; and

(4) give applicants specific and accurate information about the school system and jobs available at the time of the interview.

Alberti further suggests that school districts advertise vacancies in professional journals and newspapers.

A program of student teaching within the school district provides a vast majority of the future teachers hired in the school district according to Caress (1971, p. 394). Caress also suggests that school districts seek teachers that have dual certification as these doubly certificated educators can be important in flexible scheduling of classes.

Allen and Wagschal (1969, pp. 137-139), make a plea for state departments of education to recognize teacher training institutions that are doing a superior job of teacher preparation. As part of this recognition arrangement, the state department would agree to certify any student that this institution declares ready to teach without the hassle of checking transcripts to insure that each teacher candidate has completed certain courses that state departments usually require for professional certification. This proposal would free the institution to prepare teachers with differentiated credentials that many school districts currently need. The school districts would then be more able to recruit the teacher with the type of credentials needed for differentiated staffing.

Recruiting on college campuses is one means whereby aggressive school districts seek to select teachers with the

greatest potential. Competent young teachers who are still familiar on the college campus can serve as valuable recruiters to their Alma Maters. Bolton (1973, p. 62) suggests sending minority teachers as representatives of the school district to recruit and identify prospective candidates from minority groups on college campuses.

Bolton further suggests that employees be encouraged to ask teaching friends to seek employment in the district. This author says that schools should prepare promotional brochures and visual aid materials to be used in the district recruiting efforts.

Bolton and Hickey (1969, p. 505) attempted to determine the value of the interview as part of the selection process. In simulated interviews, conclusions reached were that:

(1) interview information did not significantly affect the ranking of applicants;

(2) interview information did increase the discrimination of the interviewer;

(3) seeing applicants was no more helpful than hearing them;

(4) seeing applicants increased interviewer's certainty about applicants; and

(5) the decision-making task was greater when interview information was received.

Koerner (1969, p. 102) states that the interview session should be used to investigate a candidate's personality. The interview process should not be used to uncover the prospective teacher's background, extent of education, or professional capabilities since the application and reference forms reveal these things.

According to Brannon (1975, p. 166), the interviewer has the opportunity to observe such important characteristics as: poise, enunciation, phrasing, posture, facial expression, manner of dress, cleanliness, and mannerisms. This educator feels that proper questioning can reveal some of the candidate's basic beliefs about education.

During an interview session, many applicants can fluently communicate their understanding of cognitive skills to be taught. Yet, these same individuals, according to DeWitt (1973, pp. 19-25), may be found to lack compassion for children. DeWitt believes the interview is the best time to learn of a teacher's inner feelings concerning teaching and children.

If the colleges of teacher preparation were more selective in admitting students to teacher education, the school district's efforts in teacher selection could be less strenuous. An article by Olmsted, Blackington, and Houston (1974, pp. 330-334) suggests that teacher preparation institutions admit only the following types of candidates to the teacher education program: "Child Focusers," "Task Focusers," "Pragmatists," and perhaps "Contented Conformist." The personality type of an applicant is important. Considerable weight should be given to determining if an applicant's personality and qualifications match the job for which the applicant seeks.

The application form can be quite revealing about some aspects of the prospective teacher's qualifications. According to Lang and Stoops (1968, pp. 39-41), hand writing and neatness are important qualities revealed by the application. Failure to fill in all the information asked for possibly indicates the applicant is witholding information. Frequent job changes may also provide clues about a teacher's past performances.

Lang and Stoops (p. 41) hold that the personal reference form aids little in the selection process because personal opinions are inherently subjective. Some individuals have never known a poor teacher; others have never known a good one.

Miller and Dennis (1972, pp. 80-82) attempted to devise a meaningful professional reference form. Their efforts culminated in a form containing the same elements as the forms they were trying to improve. They still feel that the need exists for a concise standardized professional reference form.

Many people hesitate to be completely honest when composing letters of recommendation because of the possible threat of legal action against them should this information become known to the applicant. Pending legislation and court decisions related to the applicant's access to his own personnel file may further invalidate the effectiveness of the personal reference form.

Crowe (1971, p. 31) gives an excellent step-by-step chart for the teacher selection process.. His chart lacks one very important point. He completely leaves out the principal's interview of and his acceptance or rejection of a prospective teacher. Cross and Davis (1976, p. 53) say that the principal should have a voice in teacher selection since he knows the type of teacher that would best fit into the program in his school. From another point of view, Dalton (1971, p. 478) advocates the use of students in the teacher selection model because they have the most direct contact with the teacher.

Other pre-employment investigations required in some cases are (fingerprinting), credit checks, physical examinations, tuberculin tests, photostatic copies of military records, and telephoning former employers. The telephone check is a convenient time to establish the absence patterns of prospective teachers in previous work experiences.

Videotaped credential profiles containing a sample of an applicant's teaching is suggested by Bailey (1976, p. 55-56) to be a valuable aid in teacher selection.

Crane (1972, pp. 40-41) suggests that computers will become more important in personnel selection. Computers have the ability to match job descriptions to the credentials of teacher applicants.

The selection of teachers to fill racial quotas is often not discussed except by federal judges and "red-necked" administrators. Ayers (1975, p. 105) expresses a concern that the color of one's skin becomes a qualification for teaching. Vacca (1972, p. 316) poses a counter opinion by concluding that federal courts are in general agreement that only the most qualified shall teach in the schools. Many school districts in Georgia are, for whatever reasons, forced by court orders to hire teachers according to racial ratios prescribed by the federal courts.

Conclusions

Teacher selection resulting in the best possible candidate for a teaching position is not a simple matter. Administrators are faced with faculty racial quotas, low salary schedules, local political pressures, poor teacher selection policies, public apathy toward education, and accountability demanded by state departments of education and politicians at the state level.

In the midst of all the above demands and limitations, the learning needs of the student are often overlooked. One means of providing for the student's educational needs is to recruit and select the best possible teachers.

Each of the authors quoted in this paper has offered one or more worthwhile opinions to facilitate teacher recruitment and selection. There is no best way to recruit and select teachers. Neither is there any foolproof procedure guaranteeing that even the most stringently screened teacher will perform competently in a given teaching situation.

Much of the literature insinuates that certain psychological types are desirable to teach children. People-centered individuals are among these types. Many methods are presented that aid in the selection of child-centered teachers. Kirshbaum (1969, p. 102) makes a plea for administrators to

be applicant-centered in their approaches to recruting teachers. A desirable item according to Kirshbaum is that the recruiter, in a non-form letter, answer each person that conscientiously completes an application. The possibilities of further interviews and employment opportunities in the school district should be contained in this letter. Each applicant should be dealt with from the same position of integrity.

If the selection of humanistic teachers for our students is desirable, then in agreement with Kirshbaum, administrators should be humanistic in their recruiting and selection efforts.

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